

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

TO

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REVIEWS

The Science of Poetry and the Philosophy of Language. By HUDSON MAXIM. (Funk and Wagnall's Company, New York and London. 10s. 6d. net.)

MR. HUDSON MAXIM has rushed in where angels fear to tread, and has devoted energies which might have been better employed to the evolution of a pet theory of his own. Quite recently in these columns a few examples were given of the difficulties which beset and embarrass those who attempted to define poetry; but the author of this pseudo-philosophic work has not any qualms on the subject—he is perfectly sure about everything, in his delightfully naïve American fashion. He gives us as *hors d'œuvre* a chapter on acoustics, another on the "Evolution of Analogical Speech," a third and very chaotic one entitled "What is Poetry?"; a fourth, equally chaotic, on "What Poetry is Not." In this last we find an amazing sentence:—

Had Shakespeare written a formal definition of poetry, it would, therefore, have been substantially the same as my own, as follows:—

Poetry is the expression of insensuous thought in sensuous terms by artistic trope.

Very charmingly intimate is Mr. Hudson Maxim with the immortals; yet, in spite of this, he is so nice and friendly with us, his poor, ignorant readers. He modestly relates a little story which betrays the commanding intellect, the soul rising superior to ordinary standards—a story which we take the liberty of re-telling. A "prominent literary man" once observed to him that if poetry be amenable to science and analysis (as Mr. Maxim contends), one ought then to be able to synthesise poetry by a reversal of the method. "For example, you, if your holding be true, ought to be able to write poetry. If, as you say, neither a fine frenzy nor any especial inspiration is requisite to the production of poetry, then why could you not re-write any passage from Milton's 'Paradise Lost' to equal Milton, or paraphrase Hamlet's 'Soliloquy' to equal the original of Shakespeare?" Simply and sublimely Mr. Hudson Maxim replies:—

I would undertake to rewrite a passage from Milton's "Paradise Lost," and also to paraphrase Hamlet's Soliloquy. Furthermore, as Shakespeare and Milton were obliged to pad the pentametric line-measure in non-lyrical narrative verse (*sic*), under the mistaken belief that pentameter was essential, I should have the advantage of them, for the reason that I should be unhampered by line-measure, and should not be obliged to pad or to sacrifice to the meter either lucidity or sense.

This is a part of Mr. Maxim's improved rendering of "To be or not to be":—

How fear doth poise us on the brink of death,
Between contending purposes;
When some outrageous fortune
Steals the leaden tenor of the mind,
To seek that last asylum of distress,
To die—to barter with oblivion
The heart-tire and the pain for dreamless sleep,
Were gain indeed, if that were all.
But in that sleep of death, there's hazard of the dream—
What dross of deed may cling to us and cumber our repose,

Or rouse such maddening wakefulness,
That could we peer beyond the pale,
The marrow of our mortal bones would freeze,
And every separate hair would blanch and stand aghast! . . .

"I do not pretend to be a poet, but a scientist," says Mr. Maxim, "and all the examples in the book written by me have been designed merely to illustrate the principles I am expounding, and to show that any safe and sane person of education, possessed (*sic*) of the requisite inventive imagination, can either write true poetry without any fine frenzy or divine afflatus and without having had to be born for the especial purpose, or else be able to produce such good imitations of the real thing as to render it difficult to discriminate between the counterfeit and the counterfeited." Leaving our readers to admire the composition of the above sentence, if they can, we have much pleasure in presenting a sample of Mr. Hudson Maxim's "poetry":—

THE DANCE OF SHADOWS.

Oh, the mingled joy and terror,
When her spirit, flown before,
Hand in hand with firelight shadows,
Danced around me on the floor.

Called, I joined the merry party,
Left the mortal sitting there,
Joined the laughing dance of shadows,
Joined the fancies and the air.

Sorrow then dissolved in gladness,
Joy winged wild and wilder rout;
Unsubstantial wights of being
Swung the round in merry bout.

Here, again, is a portion of an extraordinary concoction of words which the author terms an "Eulogy on Milton":—

In the abyssal ocean depths that dark and awful yawn toward Hell as far as toward the sky the highest mountain peaks extend, life teems; and there, environed by the blackness absolute of the eternal night, the living things have eyes and see by self-created phosphorescent light.

No genius, robbed of other light, still sees by its own inner luminance; and by such light lost Paradise is drawn so true that it no picture seems, but seems as tho' 'twere memory of some parental life, where we with once transcendent beauty shone, or had with giant strength gigantic deeds achieved.

There is plenty more of this, but we spare our readers. The fact is that the author's compositions are not poetry in the least, nor are they anywhere near it; they are simply aggravated and aggravating instances of what modern journalism knows as the "purple patch." His qualifications as a judge of poetry and poetic values will be apparent from this exquisite criticism: "Much of 'Paradise Lost' is merely sublime Billingsgate." He kindly sets Milton right on one or two points. "I shall first quote Milton's original, and then give a paraphrase or rendering"—whereupon we enjoy a page of "Paradise Lost" and suffer a page of Mr. Hudson Maxim. In another place he says: "But it may be argued that this is not one of the best passages of 'Paradise Lost.' Very well. If, now, we take one of Milton's best passages, we shall see that it, too, admits of improvement." Could fatuity go farther? He is good enough to suggest that "the following poem shows, perhaps, the way the Bible would have been written in the

English of to-day," a "poem" of which we quote the opening stanza:—

Like the dew-jeweled rose as it glints in the light
Of the rose-diamond glint of the morn—
As it smiles with a blush that is born of the light
Of the rose-diamond blush of the morn—
Such is Childhood.

We are thankful for that "perhaps." Most of our readers will at once see that the author is obsessed by Poe. Exactly; to Mr. Maxim "his untimely death was a cosmic calamity." "I have written the following poem," he says, "entitled 'A Veiled Illusion':—

Only a veil she has worn,
It is but a web of gauze—
Only a touch of the real,
It is but a filmy gauze:
And yet is entangled my heart in that web—
In its mesh is entangled my soul.
A gleam of a fancy is caught in that web,
And smile that entangles my soul.

This "poem" is, of course, a sheer broken reflection—very broken—of "Ulalume." Macaulay is not safe—no one is safe—from this witless commentator; we dare not call him a critic. "Nothing Shakespeare did can for a moment compare with what Herbert Spencer did." Just as well might we compare a landscape-gardener with an engineer. His reasoning is often at fault, as might be expected; for example:—

While the language of logic, or non-suggestive language, aims to awaken the understanding, and thereby to establish the thought in the mind on a sounder foundation than that of belief, suggestive language tends to inhibit the critical powers of the mind and to cause the thought to be accepted on faith without examination or analysis. Hence, suggestive language is most effective when the understanding is not awakened.

We differ entirely from that conclusion, and prefer to believe that suggestive language renders the critical powers of the mind alert, often extremely alert; so much so that the slightest flaw in construction or fault in the presentation of the idea shows up darkly against the bright background. Again: "A modern classical education unquestionably produces atrophy of poetic genius." May we just mention—with apologies to Mr. Maxim for alluding to one so far beneath him—Swinburne? Perhaps Mr. Maxim would like to re-write "Mater Triumphalis" or the "Garden of Proserpine"?

But we have said enough. We should not have treated this volume at such length had not the author's remarks on Milton and Shakespeare shown his lack of competence as a critic; until we came to them we were merely amused. With a final example of his illimitable conceit we will close. At the end of the book he gives a selection of great lines from the poets, and casually remarks: "I have inserted some of my own lines among the great poetic lines of the poets, as exemplifications of what any educated person with imagination and powers of invention may write by merely proceeding according to scientific method, and without any fine frenzy or divine afflatus." In the index to the great lines, these examples of which I am the author are marked Exm., standing for exemplification. Why did not some candid friend warn Mr. Maxim in time?

THE MYSTERIES OF MIND.

The Phenomenology of Mind (Hegel). Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by J. B. BAILLIE. (Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Two vols. 21s. net.)

The Evolution of Mind. By JOSEPH McCABE. (A. and C. Black. 5s. net.)

WITH careful scrutiny and unremitting patience our great physicians, surgeons, and biologists study the body, this curious temporary home of life, of which we are dimly

conscious all the time. To its imperative needs we pay attention every few hours, or we perish; by its aid we communicate with some scores or hundreds of fellow-beings, and its comfort or discomfort has a most serious effect upon the degree of happiness experienced in this earthly pilgrimage. We have discovered and collated, in the course of the last century or two, quite a respectable number of data with regard to the body, though little enough in comparison with what we feel lurks hidden from view; but the spirit, the consciousness of self, the "ego"—call it what we will—eludes the student's highest skill. What we are, whence we come, whither we go—these are problems which as yet no scientist dare answer definitely. "Man compels us, as we strive to take in the fulness of his meaning," says Professor Henry Jones, "to regard his actual being as potential; for his ideals of a knowledge which is adequate, and of conduct which fulfills his aims and satisfies his spirit, transcend his achievements and are beyond his reach." Precisely there do we touch the mystery: so much is beyond our reach. From this little earth we cannot move; we swing round our solemn path year by year, we voyage among the stars, knowing no comrades amid the planets of whom we can inquire, seeing no signposts on the stupendous journey which might point to some distant, invisible universe where "whatever gods there be" may sit enthroned, eternal. Yet within each one of us, atoms though we be compared to the immensities and profundities of space, lives that most wonderful of all wonders, the consciousness of identity; we have the irresistible feeling that this life is not all. We crave the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and we recognise—though we do not always confess it—the essential truth of St. Paul's magnificent assertion that "the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." This spirit, mind, thought, has been the subject of unending curiosity and investigation from the time of the Greek philosophers to the present day; for if we can only know our *selves*, our motives, springs of action, sources of ideas, and place them in some relation with the resistless force that drives us onward whether we will or not, we shall be to some extent masters of our fate and captains of our souls.

Toward this goal Aristotle worked, and in more modern times Kant and Hegel laboured. That their conclusions are very definite it is impossible to say; but the results of their indefatigable inquiry and research are the steps of a stair, as it might be, up which later philosophers have mounted, and, though the summit is still afar off, every stage in the ascent gives a clearer view, gains a wider outlook.

In presenting this comprehensive translation of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Mind," Professor Baillie explains in a lucid and well-conceived introduction the position of Hegel among the wise men of the early nineteenth century, and observes truly that "so exhaustive an analysis of the life-history of the human spirit, so sustained an effort to reduce its complex and involved harmonies to their simple, elemental, leading motives, and to express these controlling ideas in an orderly, connected system, has certainly never been compressed within the compass of a single treatise." These columns are not the place for an elaborate review of Hegel's voluminous dissertations; with his main scheme—if he can be said to possess any well-defined scheme—all advanced students of psychology and philosophy will be conversant as a matter of course; but we may mention a few phases of the work which appeal to a wider circle than the purely scientific review might reach. There are many acute sentences of insight which stand out sharply from the absorbing arguments and close reasonings of the principal contents. "What we are familiar with," writes Hegel warningly, "is not intelligently known, just for the reason that it is familiar. When engaged in the process of knowing, it is the commonest form of self-deception, and a deception of other people as well, to assume something to be familiar, and give assent to it on that very account." In

the section entitled "Reason as Law-giver" comes the following passage, especially significant in view of the tendency of the social world to-day:—

Intelligent, veritable (*wesentlich*) well-doing is, in its richest and most important form, the intelligent and universal action of the state—an action compared with which the action of a particular individual as such is something altogether so trifling that it is hardly worth talking about. The action of the state in this connection is of such great weight and strength, that if the action of the individual were to oppose it, and either sought to be straightway and deliberately (*für sich*) criminal, or out of love for another, wanted to cheat the universal out of the right and claim which it has upon him, such action would be useless, and would inevitably be annihilated.

The second volume, in spite of the haste with which it was composed—Professor Baillie relates the story of Hegel and his publishers in a very interesting manner in his introduction—contains sections which are of a more extensive appeal than the somewhat abstruse and not always coherent arguments of the previous part. Conscience, the moral view of the world, evil and forgiveness, religion—these are subjects whose value as themes for discussion cannot be over-estimated. "The moral consciousness," says the great philosopher, "cannot renounce happiness and drop this element out of its absolute purpose":—

Enjoyment is involved in moral sentiment, for morality seeks, not to remain sentiment as opposed to action, but to act or realise itself. Thus the purpose, expressed as a whole along with the consciousness of its elements or moments, is that duty fulfilled shall be both a purely moral act and a realised individuality, and that nature, the aspect of particularity in contrast with abstract purpose, shall be one with this purpose.

The illustration in the preface of bud, blossom, and fruit as one indivisible act or progression—though bud and blossom both vanish—is arresting, and is but one example of Hegel's way of using a quite common metaphor to enforce a pertinent deduction. How slack he could on occasion allow himself to be appears in the sentence in which he refers to "metre and accent in the case of rhythm." "Rhythm," he writes, "is the result of what hovers between and unites both." Not many such vague statements, however, are to be found in these logical pages. Two sections, and two only, can be read apart from the context without losing their interest: the discussion on virtue, in the first volume, and the analysis of the ethics of family life in the second volume—a basis upon which many teachers who came after Hegel have built their superstructures for the admiration of the schools.

The translator has done his work splendidly. We note here and there a sentence which might have been fashioned more rigidly, having regard to the extremely urgent nature of the thesis—which renders ambiguity of the slightest description a fault to be avoided as the plague. Once or twice confusion occurs through the verb and its object having the wrong numbers, and the word "got" is used unhappily in the sense of "became." But on the whole, considering the monumental nature of the task, which must have been a labour of years, Professor Baillie is to be heartily praised, congratulated, and thanked for the masterly way in which he has rendered into English a treatise that bristled with difficulties. His notes of explanation are excellent, and exceedingly helpful.

In Professor McCabe's book, "The Evolution of Mind," we confront another facet of the problem of consciousness. We are concerned here not so much with mind itself as with when it began to be. Between the primitive forms of life, which exist (as far as we know) but to feed on such nourishment as may float within range of their simple

digestive organs, and man, who eats that he may live and work and attain some measure of conscious happiness, a great and apparently impassable gulf is fixed. At some period or another, definite reason, thought, consciousness of personality and purpose, must have been born, must have taken the place of mere unthinking "instinct"—a term which has led to much confusion, and which the author, we are pleased to note, objects to strongly.

"There is every reason to expect that evolutionary research will do for psychology all that it has done for zoology." This pregnant and perhaps rather optimistic statement, which occurs in the introduction, may be taken as the key-note of the book; through the lowest forms of life Professor McCabe traces the development of the faculty which many people call intelligence, but which he prefers to regard merely as a response to stimuli, and endeavours to ascertain whether in the records of naturalists and students of animal life we can legitimately say that here, at such a moment, the living creature reasoned, deduced, was conscious of its identity, its relation with surroundings, in a manner which should lead us to draw any analogy between the human mind and the "mind" of the lower order. In some instances, we think, he is in danger of being charged with special pleading. Those of us who have had a dog for a friend find it hard to deny a large degree of intelligence, which at times approaches reasoning power, to that faithful animal; the cat which rattles at the key of a door "asks" to be admitted in a way that seems to postulate more than the limited "imitative action" which is all the author will allow it to possess. Apart from this, however, the book is excellently stimulating and of unusual interest; it abounds with keen thought and lively observation. We may quote from the chapter entitled "The Dawn of Humanity" a passage which our readers will appreciate:—

There is a spurious uniformity in the mental manifestations of the members of a civilised community. Vast numbers of even Europeans would sink to a very low level if it were not for the sustaining influence of society, and especially of language. Speech is a buoy, provided by the community, to maintain at a certain level members of the race who would normally sink below it. By that medium they are enabled to borrow and express ideas of objects and relations which are entirely beyond their native capacity. It is as difficult to penetrate to the normal working of their "minds" as it is to grasp the religious views of a lowly tribe of savages. What they themselves regard with pride as the operation of their intelligence is often only a kaleidoscopic play of phrases borrowed from their journals or from speeches or conversations. Behind their crude formation one discerns a very primitive, narrow, and concrete intelligence. If we could imagine the disappearance of speech, the "human mind" would quickly cease to be the impressive unity it is.

The chief barrier to research in this delicate field is, of course, that there is nothing tangible to be examined, nothing that can be scrutinised under a microscope, docketed and labelled. "Mind leaves no fossil impressions in the soil." The records are far from unbroken; surmise has often to take the place of scrutiny; the mind of the savage has never yet been thoroughly investigated, and opportunities are infrequent for such a type of research. Nevertheless, this volume is a notable contribution to psychological literature, and the author's talent for arrangement and selection is so obvious that we have no hesitation in recommending "The Evolution of Mind" to the attention of all who are interested in his subject, whether they are definitely students or not. Unfortunately, in the copy sent to us for review seventeen pages are missing at a vital part of the argument—"The Mammal Brain"; this fault of binding we trust does not extend to the whole edition, for the work deserves a large circulation, and compels thought at almost every paragraph.

THE RESURRECTION OF VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM.

Villiers de l'Isle-Adam: Biographie et Bibliographie. By E. DE ROUGEMONT. (Mercure de France, Paris.)

MOST of the great artists who have been martyred in this life—even Poe, even Mozart, even Baudelaire—were in some measure consoled for their miseries and disappointments by the consciousness of small groups existing here and there which recognised their genius. Villiers de l'Isle-Adam had not even this consolation. By those to whom his name was familiar, he was considered a "fumiste." When other men of letters saw him entering a café they would say among themselves: "Here comes the bore." At forty-five he was generally regarded as a failure. He was over forty-five before he got any sort of footing on periodicals which paid for his contributions. It is an odd instance of the injury a man can do himself by simply keeping silent about his private affairs, that even his distinguished name, to which he had really every right, was thought to be assumed. To see this poor devil, who lived in black poverty, who even at one time, it is said, came down to be assistant in a boxing saloon, carrying a great historic name, gave satirical onlookers the effect of a street beggar who has somehow picked up a robe of stage-paganry and goes flaunting with it over his rags. Mr. George Moore, for instance, who knew Villiers, says in his "Memories" that the poet adopted his aristocratic name as part of his equipment. The contrast between the name and the circumstances was too much for the wits, and they improved the situation. Villiers, they said, had put in a claim to the throne of Greece. By a few words he could have set this question of his name at rest, but he never mentioned his family or his way of life; deemed all conversation about such topics superfluous, took himself for granted, and imagined others would do the same. But others did not; he had no luck of any kind. And just when some slight improvement was perceptible in his worldly prospects, he died in hospital, in the year of millennium 1889, at the age of fifty. Perhaps he did not suffer from existence so much as one might think from this harrowing account. We hope not: that would be too atrocious. We prefer to console ourselves with the fancy that as he was apparently a man in a state of constant hallucination, and accordingly only half-conscious of the common events of life, he was in a measure unaffected by the rough world, the quotidian pangs, insults, humiliations, which are really, rather than great misfortunes, what bring many finely-tempered spirits to a lamentable end.

This sad life offers many opportunities to the biographer, but it cannot be said that M. de Rougemont has availed himself of his opportunities. His book is extremely painstaking from the bibliographical point of view, but we confess to a very languid interest in the accounts of various publications which are spread before us. To interest people in a man you must tell them how he lived, and what he thought of the conditions of his life. You must tell, and tell frankly, of his dealings with other men, with women, and the little details of existence. Boswell proceeds by anecdote. Now, M. de Rougemont proclaims with a certain air of austerity that he eschews anecdote and legend. But it is by anecdote and legend that a man's person is remembered in the long run. The greatest compliment which can be paid a man is to deny he ever existed. Next, after that, it is to weave legends about him. Far from being valueless, they have always in them some traits of the hero and help his picture; even as a bad photograph is better than no photograph. In the case of a man such as Villiers, it is only by anecdote and legend that we can get any hold on him at all. Certainly we get no hold on him in M. de Rougemont's book. What he felt, how he lived and behaved, what he considered his joys and what his sorrows, we know no more than we did before. All we get is the impression of a vague person, extremely voluble, talking interminably whenever he

could find a listener. There is no body in the presentation; it is as baffling and insubstantial as fog.

It may be, of course, that Villiers really had not a very striking personality. What seems more probable is that, like many another man of genius, he was brilliant and impressive on this occasion, sluggish and untoward on that. This, at all events, is the character of his work; it is rather unequal. M. de Rougemont demands the publication of all Villiers' scattered writings in a uniform edition; but, although agreeing that this should be done, we are not at all sure that it would help Villiers with the general public so much as his biographer thinks. For M. de Rougemont, Villiers is the greatest genius of the nineteenth century, and the least of his little newspaper sketches pure gold. He has only hard words for those who, while praising his hero, venture to qualify their praise. Will it be believed that he attributes the failure of Villiers to reach a wide public to an immense plot organised by the poet's contemporaries to keep him down? Catulle Mendès, it appears, played the part of Grimm in this plot to the Rousseau of Villiers. Now that Mendès is dead, Villiers is resuscitated and a monument to him can at last be set up.

Well, we don't deny that Villiers had enemies, and was even badly served by his friends, and very likely they injured him in various ways, but we cannot think it is owing to them he is so little known. Other reasons less sensational may be suggested. All of Villiers' work, even when it seems merely occasional, is above the popular level. His style, for one thing, which is very often of singular beauty—"Akedysséril" is one of the masterpieces of the French language—is often also rather difficult, exacting an effort of attention to follow it as much, say, as the prose of Meredith or Mallarmé. Further, although a style good from a linguistic standpoint, it has not a profound individual note. "Akedysséril" may be actually better language than anything of Flaubert or Renan, but it lacks the personal thrill which those masters knew how to communicate to their prose.

But that, after all, as an explanation, does not cover the ground, for much other work which was above the popular level during its author's life, and left him starving, has become popular in far less time than has passed since the death of Villiers. What is really the matter with Villiers is that too frequently, from one cause or another, he fails to interest. One French critic, Weill, went so far as to say that no reader could be found who had commenced a book of this "Baudelaire en simili" and finished it without having many times thrown it aside. This is only the ignoble snort we are always hearing from young and old critics (for it is a mistake to suppose that these spasms are confined to the old) whom the new and original shocks and infuriates; but, nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there are some terribly arid pages among the writings of Villiers. Like many other men occupied exclusively with ideas, he never asked himself if what interested him was certain to interest others. He lacked the critical faculty which seizes your artist by the collar and stands him outside his work. Hence, in his dramas, the action stops while the characters speculate on abstract questions. Some parts of "L'Eve Future" are monstrous heavy; and among his short pieces, "L'Etna chez soi," for instance, with its formulas and figures, is as dull as a chymical text-book.

What will raise more dispute is to say that another gift which fails this really great artist is the power of creating an atmosphere. Most of his stories have as little atmosphere as a philosophical tale of the eighteenth century. Poe, Barbey, Hawthorne, Hoffmann, Balzac—those great masters of the short story—envelop you in an atmosphere before you have gone a paragraph. It is unquestionably on account of this lack of atmosphere that several of the stories of Villiers don't get quite home. When you read a number of them in succession, you find yourself asking, upon re-reading the titles some time later, what many of them were about. In this business of creating an

atmosphere he is far below writers who are far below himself—Maturin, for example, Anne Radcliffe, Le Fanu, Bulwer-Lytton. What keeps the best of Villiers' stories in memory is not the treatment, but the idea—the idea, as it were, undressed and sterilised. In some of them, in fact, the treatment seems to us actually wrong, and instead of enforcing, almost smothering the idea. And when, as in a few cases, his story has no central idea but is written up to a phrase, or to a surprise, which can be expressed in a few lines, we find that it makes but a transient impression, notwithstanding his abusive employment of italics and capitals for emphasis—a trick he learned from Poe. It is in the tales which aim to excite terror that this lack of atmosphere is felt the most. Precisely the best of his tales of this kind are two which he does succeed in surrounding with atmosphere—"Catalina," a perfect work of art, where an exotic atmosphere is worked up somewhat after the manner of Mérimée, and "Les Phantasmes de M. Redoux," the atmosphere in this case being due to Mme. Tussaud's wax-work show in London. His other tales, excellent as they are, have hardly more atmosphere about them than a proposition of Euclid.

But this lack of atmosphere about his work, which weakens the effect of his tales of terror, actually is a benefit to his ironical writing, and it is as a master of a peculiar irony, drastic, pitiless, and withal poetic, that Villiers has his surest title to fame. He has the most deadly kind of irony—the irony of the idealist whose ideals have been shattered and degraded, of the sentimentalist who has been soured by his contact with life. Its range extends from light, almost good-natured raillery to a savage impersonal kind of scariification. He is never pre-occupied with mere vulgarities like Thackeray; he is never grossly material like Swift. Inasmuch as he was a poet, and Swift was none; inasmuch as his capacity for taking high and noble views of life and the enterprises of his soul was infinitely superior to Swift's; inasmuch as the pity and terror of life brought him meanings whereof Swift had no conception; inasmuch as he has to choke down his tears while Swift has no tears to hide—in just so much, then, is his irony more powerful and effective even than Swift's. This is high praise, and it is meant to be. Who that has studied the biting irony of "Les Demoiselles de Bienfilatre," of "L'Aventure de Tse-i-la," of "L'Incomprise," of "Le Meilleur Amour," of "Les Plagiaires de la Foudre," and of that extraordinary work, "L'Eve Future," can doubt that it is justified?

It is not amazing that a man who could write such things should struggle continually with the direst want, suffer from the obstinate silence of literary "friends," who, having a footing on the Press, might have helped him by a few notices and never did, and end his life on the pallet of a hospital—no, that is not amazing, for it has been seen before and will be seen again. But what is amazing is that such work should have been esteemed for so long a time, and so generally, as merely negligible. In the histories of French literature, sprung from the prolific pens of Faguet, Lanson, Doumic, and others, Villiers is not so much as mentioned. This neglect can only be explained by the recalcitrance of people in general before irony, to which may be added the hostility which has been manifested at all stages of the world to a certain order of genius. Villiers himself, in his story "Maitre Pied," foretold his own fate, even to the statue.

BEFORE AGAMEMNON.

The Sea-kings of Crete. By the Rev. JAMES BAIKIE, F.R.A.S. (A. and C. Black. 7s. 6d. net.)

PRAISE, of the least qualified, must be given both to author and publisher on the excellence of this book. The print and the illustrations, from photographs, which form a most important factor in its value, and the binding are alike admirable. Mr. James Baikie, too, has performed

his part well. Such a compilation, drawn from the best and most recent sources, could hardly have been better done; but then that is what the critic would expect from the author of the well-known books on ancient Egypt and astronomy. If Mr. Baikie has not himself contributed anything essential or original to the marvellous story of the Cretan Sea-kings, he has, at any rate, succeeded in outlining a probable history of the most fascinating kind, concerning a race which was dominant in the Eastern Mediterranean centuries before the Homeric age. The account is so extraordinary as to be almost beyond belief. But there can be no question now that the whole of a very advanced civilisation was absolutely destroyed and vanished, as completely as if it had never been—a civilisation coeval with the most ancient Egyptian dynasties on record. Almost more extraordinary still, the relics of the rule of the Cretan Sea-kings were discovered almost by sheer accident. Had it not been for Dr. Schliemann and his finding of the ruins of Troy, the Cretans would to this day be unknown as the enjoyers of a high state of culture, in some respects perhaps even superior to that which is attributed to the classical age of Greece.

We, all of us, whether as schoolboys or as undergraduates, read with the utmost incredulity, what used to be regarded as mythology, about King Minos of Crete, who was subsequently appointed judge in the lower world; about his Labyrinth, his Minotaur, the tribute of seven youths and seven maidens from Athens as a sacrifice to the monster, the heroic exploit of the Athenian Theseus, who, with the help of the beautiful Ariadne, daughter of Minos, tracing his way through the Labyrinth by means of her hair, not only managed to slay the Minotaur, but also to run off with Ariadne. Twenty or thirty years ago we were under the impression that all this was an ingenious fabrication of the Greek mind, just as we were sceptical about the Trojan war and the existence of Troy, and disbelieved in Herodotus. Yet Troy was discovered, and found to have been a far more ancient city than classical scholars had had any conception of. Various statements of Herodotus that seemed to be glaringly impossible have been shown to be well within the truth; and the actual existence of a King Minos of Crete, a Labyrinth, a Minotaur, the Athenian tribute, Theseus and Ariadne, the Dictæan cave, and the rest of the lore associated in the Greek mind with Crete has been proved, well nigh conclusively, to be based upon fact.

The Labyrinth was, in all probability, the huge palace of Knossos, which, under the inspiring direction of Dr. A. J. Evans and other enthusiastic archaeologists, has been laid bare in its ruins within recent years, disclosing the most beautiful treasures of art in the way of pottery, frescoes, gems, seals, jewellery of all kinds. The palace, with its curious windings, and the cells in the basement, probably intended for the reception of the victims to the Cretan bull-god, would have remained in the imagination of the Greek mainlanders as the embodiment of a horrible abode of torture, to which the dominant, cruel kings of Crete compelled them to send their male and female tribute. The sacrifice of the victims seems to have been always the occasion of great feasting and enjoyment, and to have been viewed by the Cretans in much the same spirit as a bull-fight by Spaniards. Death came, sooner or later, to these unfortunate folk in the shape of being gored to death by the bulls, whom in vain did they endeavour to escape by various tricks of leaping and vaulting. This is over and over again depicted in the artworks that have been unearthed. It was evidently a most popular form of amusement. When so much has been revealed by excavation, there certainly appears to be no inherent improbability in the tale of Theseus and Ariadne.

Let every reader, however, procure Mr. Baikie's fascinatingly interesting book, and peruse for himself the details of this wondrous civilisation, which was so suddenly and inexplicably wiped off from the face of the earth. The religious mysteries of the Cretans, their earth-goddess, their priest-kings, their splendid works of art, equal in some cases to the best of the later, well-known Greek

periods, their yet undeciphered language, their love of the open air and the sea, and all beautiful things, their social arrangements, which seem to have had something of the Homeric type in them, especially with relation to women, their vigour and energy in spreading the power of their influence from Spain to Asia Minor and North Africa, their intimate relations with ancient Egypt—these and many other subjects of absorbing interest, are they not discussed at length and most lucidly in the volume before us? What is mysterious is certainly the complete destruction of that wide-spread and highly-civilised dominion of seafaring people, who, whilst no doubt possessed of the piratical temper which is reflected even as late as the Homeric period, fostered at the same time that intense passion for art and beautiful things which is so characteristic of the Hellenic nature, and excuses it for much of its barbarity as revealed in the human sacrifices to the bull-god.

SHORTER REVIEWS

Natur und Kunstschaffen: eine Schöpfungskunde. By Dr. ADOLF HARPF. (H. Costenoble, Jena. 5 marks.)

IN "Natur und Kunstschaffen: eine Schöpfungskunde" Dr. Adolf Harpf sets out to lay the foundations of a scientific study of the creative impulse in art, which must, as he points out, rest in its turn on a study of the creative force in nature. To catch and analyse that elusive divine spark which we call genius, to reduce to a formula the mysterious essence which is distilled from some unseen source into certain chosen vessels, is a tempting task to the metaphysician, and Dr. Harpf approaches it with enthusiasm. He claims to be the first thinker who has illuminated the subject from the ethnographical standpoint. His book, however, will not startle the reader by any very striking originality of thought. On the question of skulls and their intellectual significance the author is gloomy. He finds the growing preponderance of the Turanian type of short skull (closely allied to the Semitic type) coincident with a terrible degeneration of German literature. The artfully built-up sentences, enclosing as in a labyrinth of words a central idea, the ponderous twenty-line phrases, beloved of the reasoning long-skulled student, are out of favour in these days of false ideals.

In his discussion of modern literature Dr. Harpf's views are marred by excessive bitterness. He attacks his opponents with abusive vigour, and descends to anti-Semitic outbursts which strike one as out of place. Neither art nor science yields its inmost secrets to a mind which would build a heaven-high wall as boundary between race and race and top it by a spiky fringe of prejudice. His theory that the greater simplicity of construction favoured by the current writers of Germany is due to what he calls their "mental short-windedness," is not convincing.

In the essay entitled "The True Author" he maintains:—

"The typewriter, which nowadays serves many authors in transcribing their work, can only add to this condition of 'overwriting,' since it adds to the hastiness of conception. Also the protection of literary and artistic productions in all civilised States, with the exception of North America, has done far more to increase the breed of those who write for money than it has done for the improvement of the literary output; while, on the other hand, the former absence of any such protection and the hair-raising exploitation of authors and publishers by literary pirates in no way hindered or injured the fine flower of European literatures. . . ."

It is surely unfair, in comparing the ancient writers, who wrote purely for art's sake (if, indeed, they were invariably free from such motives as the winning of a patron's favour or the bay leaves of the appreciative), with the money-grubbing writers of to-day, to leave out of the reckoning the huge demand for the printed word which exists in our modern civilisation.

Popular Hymns, Their Authors and Teaching. By the Rev. Canon DUNCAN. (Skeffington and Son. 5s. net.)

WRITTEN by a popular clergyman, on a popular subject, this book should have a wide circulation. The plan on which it is built is novel. Each of the chief English hymn-writers, from William Kethe, the probable author of our version of the Old Hundred (dating c. 1550), down to Bickersteth, the creator of "Peace, Perfect Peace," is represented by one hymn, and one only—that which is generally, or by Canon Duncan, considered the best. This, and the chronological arrangement of the hymns, certainly give interest and variety to the collection. But it is not an ordinary collection of sacred song. There is a biography of the author of the hymn attached to each one, an excellent, simple comment in brief sermon form—the book consisted originally in a number of sermons on hymns delivered at Newcastle-on-Tyne—but the sermon, so-called, is of the most interesting and most charming, appealing to religious-minded people of all ages. There is the further attraction in the book that there is no invidious preference shown, and providing the hymn is written in English there is no exclusion on account of individual belief. So we find Newman's immortal "Lead, kindly Light" in juxtaposition with the ever-pathetic "Nearer my God, to Thee." Wesley and Watts, Toplady and Keble, and all the glorious expositors of kindly, simple Faith in verse are found side by side in this truly eclectic volume. After a perusal of it we are entirely in sympathy with Canon Duncan when he observes that whatever hard differences of Christian belief may exist, it is remarkable how they all merge into harmony and unity in the expression of simple, child-like emotion, such as is to be found in our most beautiful English hymns. May such a spirit ever be propagated in Christianity! It will do more for re-union than a million learned essays.

Maeterlinck's Symbolism: The Blue Bird, and Other Essays. By HENRY ROSE. (A. C. Fifield. 2s. net.)

The author of this little volume takes himself too seriously, and continually over-elaborates his theme. Those of our readers who are familiar with Maeterlinck's wholly delightful play, which forms the subject of the opening essay, will remember the Fairy's remark: "I can do without the grass that sings, at a pinch; but I absolutely *must* have the Blue Bird." Mr. Rose wanders sentimentally on from this as a text in the following manner:—

By this is meant that, though the knowledge of the advanced forms of physical science is good, it is of relatively little importance to man's higher spiritual needs: it is not to be compared for real serviceableness with the truth which is spiritual, and of which our perception may be clear though our knowledge of the physical sciences be no greater than was that of the simple fishermen who were the first disciples.

On another page we find similar amplification of the Fairy's words:—

What are many of our Churches but so many cages in which it is sought to have the Truth in close keeping? All this, however, is in accordance with the Divine order. In our present state the belief that success in our search for Truth is soon and completely possible is ever a strong incentive to go forward. Hence we have the kindly instruction which the Fairy gives to Bread.

"Such I take to be the meaning of Maeterlinck in this beautiful play," says the author, at the close of fifty laborious pages, and adds that he considers it one of the most beautiful plays ever written. It may be so; we are not concerned to dispute the point; but to pick it to pieces and ticket each bit in this didactic fashion is simply to destroy its beauty, not to enhance it; the dainty, delicate savour of Maeterlinck's magical art is spoiled, just as a rough, heavy hand may ruin a butterfly's wing or tear down a shining, dewy cobweb on a summer morning.

On the "Optimism of Browning" Mr. Rose pleases us; he has original thoughts, and expresses them well; although even here we do not agree that when Robert

Browning wrote, "All's right with the world," he intended to convey that "Whatever is, is right." It seems to us a distortion of the meaning. In the final essay, entitled "The Musical Mind: A Study in Social Harmonies," there is not much food for the inquiring reader. To take the words of the "Lost Chord" as a text, and to enlarge upon them, is really—well, we hardly know what to say; Mr. Rose is in danger of being regarded as an unintentional humorist. Before he publishes again we hope he will submit his efforts to some candid, critical friend.

Old Kensington Palace, and Other Papers. By AUSTIN DOBSON. (Chatto and Windus. 6s.)

IN this volume Mr. Dobson has collected a number of essays that appeared recently in the pages of the *National Review* and the *Quarterly Review*, and which, as his many admirers will hardly need telling, show no falling off in distinction or charm from the essays that delighted us long since in "Eighteenth Century Vignettes" and other charming volumes. Mr. Dobson's essays, like his verses, have all the subtle qualities of *pot-pourri*; the men and women of the eighteenth century who move in his pages, reawakened by the touch of his sympathetic hand, are as suggestive of fragrant, forgotten years as the rose petals that wise women store up in ancient porcelain vases. Handled roughly, these frail spectres of the past will crumble to the dust reality would have them be. Laureate Whitehead was a bad poet, and is in truth very dead. So are Sir John Hawkins, the rival of Boswell and Chambers who "built" Kew Gardens, and Mr. Cradock, of Gumley, who did nothing at all in particular. But Mr. Austin Dobson, we repeat, has a sympathetic hand, and at his bidding these dead men take on the appearance of life to charm us for an hour with the grace of a century that is dead. There is something more than charm in Mr. Dobson's work. There is scholarship and erudition and that sympathetic appreciation of humour that is almost as rare as humour itself. We hope that we shall have the pleasure of adding other volumes to a section of our bookshelves to which we always recur gladly.

FICTION.

PLOT AND ATMOSPHERE.

Enchanted Ground. By HARRY JAMES SMITH. (Constable and Co. 6s.)

The House of Serravalle. By RICHARD BAGOT. (Methuen and Co. 6s.)

The Hand of the North. By MARION FOX. (John Lane. 6s.)

"ENCHANTED GROUND."

THERE is a great deal of solid and conscientious work in Mr. Smith's novel. Take the plot—the bare skeleton of the book—and one would not say that it was a very notable invention. You have young Philip Wetherell, an emotional and artistic New Englander, set down in the midst of the turmoil and temptation of New York; you have the siren, the enchantress, Katrinka; the moment when the strain of temptation grows too severe for the man's endurance; the fall; and finally the recovery. This is simple enough; but the scheme is developed with very considerable originality, and one is taught once more that treatment is—not quite everything, but almost everything. And the counterplot, concerned with the early lapse of Colonel Raeburn, is distinctly ingenious. And there are noteworthy matters, apart from the plot, scattered here and there through the book. Thus Barry, the pessimist, discourses of Thanksgiving Day:—

Thank Him for flowers; thank Him also for lice and scabs and blight and slug. Thank Him for the inestimable gift of health; thank Him equally for tuberculosis bacilli, hookworm, leprosy, and the rest. . . . Look abroad with wide-open seeing eyes on the kingdom of Nature . . . and tell me what you discover. Teeth to tear, fangs to

poison, hooks, tusks to rend and gore, stings, claws, venom-pouches, suckers—oh, yes, a thousand convincing evidences of God's peace and good-will. Go to the Parasites, O true believer, consider their ways, and be wise. . . . What is Nature but conflict, pitiless, murderous, uncompromising, unremittent conflict, where one out of five, one out of ten—yes, in lower species, one out of millions—survives, and the rest feed the Cosmic Process. By all means let us return thanks, thanks, for the ineffable beauties of Nature! Let us go humbly to Nature, and through Nature humbly to Nature's God.

Contrast this diatribe, one-sided, but just as far as it goes, with the infinite amount of sloppy sermonising that is still uttered in certain quarters as to a Deity of boundless benevolence being infallibly deduced from a consideration of the natural order of things. Of course, both the pessimist and the optimist are equally astray; the former is so intent on the Sahara that he forgets the existence of the water pools, while the mild divines who praise the absolute loving-kindness of Nature have apparently forgotten that all creation is represented by St. Paul as being in a condition of travelling and groaning—in a state that is of trouble, imperfection, and expectation.

There are many passages of a quite different order that would well bear quotation if space were available. One should note the French family, especially the old, broken-down chef who determines to exercise once more that skill which had made Rouen ring—and murders his lodger's pet pigeon. Praise, too, must be given to the two minor characters, the chorus girl and the clerk, and to their sentimental mother, who is beautifully drawn.

"THE HOUSE OF SERRAVALLE."

The Duca di Monteleone, the last, as it is supposed, of an ancient and illustrious house, is desirous of engaging a well-born English gentleman as his private secretary and literary assistant. Hence the journey of Walter Heron from his London club to Monteleone, a castle in the Tuscan Maremma. There we encounter the villain of the piece, the chaplain, Don Torquato Grimaldi; and Mr. Bagot plunges into his well-elaborated and absorbing plot of intrigue and assassination. The book is undoubtedly distinguished by careful and considered craftsmanship; the reader is lured on from step to step of the priest's progress up to the moment of Don Torquato's dramatic discovery and defeat; it is not a tale that one can put down when one is fairly caught in the coils of the author's contrivance. And yet one is forced to hesitate, to inquire—after the secret, if it all has come out—whether one's attention has been captured quite legitimately. Let it be clearly understood we are judging the author by high standards—by the standards which he himself sets before us—and we cannot help being convinced that Mr. Bagot, having done well, could do much better. The novel has a hundred ways in which it may interest; there are cases in which a single character, wonderfully drawn, may light up a whole book. Or the salt of a story may be a sense of humour; or, again, it may lie in the sheer appeal of the plot, in the merit of the tale, qua tale. But in this latter case the story must have extraordinary merit, it must enthrall us by virtue of something that is universal: "Leah," if related in a few bold words, would still interest and impress. Here it is that the author of "The House of Serravalle" fails. He has given us life, and life full of incident and strange adventure; but he has not succeeded in making one feel that his plot is "necessary," typical, or of that universal appeal which characterises the masterpieces of fiction; which characterises, too, such folk tales as "Cinderella." Take, indeed, the story instanced; imagine your feelings if it ended with Cinderella still amongst the ashes, and the bad sisters still wicked, proud, and triumphant. You would experience a real shock. How would you like a "Martin Chuzzlewit" which left Mr. Pecksniff master of the situation? And from this imagined shock we see that "Cinderella" has that quality of necessity which is another name for universality. And it is to be feared that Don Torquato,

the wicked priest, might have succeeded in his worst designs without awaking in the reader's mind that sense of revolt, that feeling of "it cannot be so."

"THE HAND OF THE NORTH."

On the face of it we have here an historical novel. The subject at first appears to be the mad revolt of Essex in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and according to all the precedents and canons of historical novel-writing, the hero, Sir David Armstrong, is involved in the conspiracy: his skill as a swordsman is valuable to the plotters. Well, Armstrong escapes from the consequences of his action and gets away to his native north, and this is the moment when the book really begins. It is not so much in the events that follow that one must seek the curious merit of this romance; it is rather in what one must vaguely call the atmosphere. The scene is laid near Hexham, in the wild lands of Northumberland; and the author has certainly succeeded in investing that beautiful country with a peculiar and original enchantment. The method is a little vague at times—it is hard to conjecture the precise end of *Red Simon*—but the writer possesses the secret of landscape, the knowledge of the spell that hills and woods and waste places are able to cast upon the heart. We see the real and valuable truth which underlies the common moralising about mountains and valleys and dark forests, and the usual reflections as to the littleness of man in the presence of nature. As this doctrine is usually enforced it is sheer nonsense; it is not true—save only in the physical sense—that a mountain is greater than a man; or that a pine tree is holier than a human being. One can no more compare man and nature (in this fashion) than one can institute comparisons of value between an adder and an epigram. But as profound and mystic truth is often concealed beneath the letter of popular sayings, so it is in this case; the mountain and the waste and the river do certainly communicate to the heart of man—or awake in the heart of man—the knowledge of ineffable secrets of his nature; and it is in this sense that they may be said to convince him of his littleness—that is, of the littleness of many of the interests which in his ordinary moods he regards as of the highest and most vital importance. And it is in the realisation of this secret doctrine that we find the merit of "The Hand of the North."

Clayhanger. By ARNOLD BENNETT. (Methuen and Co. 6s.)

MR. ARNOLD BENNETT settles for himself the vexed question of the length of novels by writing the history of his hero for over five hundred and seventy pages, and then breaking off short with the calm remark that in the autumn of 1911 we may expect a second instalment, with a third still to follow. We are not blaming him, for we had to sit up half the night to finish "Clayhanger," but it is annoying to have to wait a year for the rest of his story. However, so fine an artist as Mr. Bennett must work in his own way. That peculiarly delightful way is by now fairly well known to readers of the "Five Towns" novels. It is by the use of detail, detail carried occasionally to excess, but invariably interesting, that this epic of provincial industrialism is being written. Nothing seems to escape the author's watchful eyes; whether he is describing a woman, a man, a room, or a crowd, he accumulates the small significant points with a fearful and wonderful accuracy, and gives a series of tiny climaxes that are almost uncanny in their power to bring the person or the scene before the mental vision. He hits people and situations off so neatly, at times, that he induces a wriggle and a chuckle of appreciation. Edwin Clayhanger, for example, had "never dined; he had merely had dinner"; and "the look of elaborate negligence assumed by every self-respecting person who waits to be introduced" is excellent.

The main theme of this portion of a novel—for we cannot profess to regard it as a completed work—is the relation between Darius Clayhanger, a printer, and Edwin, his son, who is conscious of a vague desire to extend his life and his experience beyond the narrow bounds of

"Bursley." All through the book these two are in a dull antagonism which only becomes acute at various critical moments; and, although Edwin so far yields as to take charge of the business and succeed his father as a master printer, he is continually reminded, sometimes by a woman's hand, sometimes by literature, at other times by the incursion of a friend of school days, that there is a larger, broader world with which he has had nothing to do, the inhabitants of which would probably regard him and his circumscribed existence with a certain degree of curiosity. His nature wakes slowly. His first glimpse of woman, as woman, comes at a merry-making of the "Bursley Mutual Burial Club," where a female clog-dancer does her best to shock the wooden propriety of the stolid company in the smoky assembly-room of the Dragon. He goes home, and tries to read; "he wanted as much as ever to do wondrous things, and to do them soon, but it appeared to him that he must think out first the enigmatic subject of Florence."

Never had he seen any female creature as he saw her, and ephemeral images of her were continually forming and dissolving before him. He could come to no conclusion at all about the subject of Florence. Only his boyish pride was gradually being beaten back by an oncoming idea that up to that very evening he had been a sort of rather silly kid with no eyes in his head.

Later comes his introduction to Hilda Lessways, when both he and she are well over their majority, and inflammable. His love for her, and her sudden surrender, are described with a sympathy and insight which few authors could surpass, and the current of his solitary musings after they have parted shows us the youth realising for the first time the meaning of life:—

He saw himself married. He thought of Clara's grotesque antics with her tedious babe. And he thought of his father and of vexations. But that night he was a man. She, Hilda, with her independence and her mystery, had inspired him with a full pride of manhood. And he discovered that one of the chief attributes of a man is an immense tenderness.

Hilda's first love-letter to him is perfect. "Dearest,—This is my address. I love you. Every bit of me is absolutely yours. Write me.—H. L." Then comes the tragic news which keeps him from her until he is a serious, prosperous man of nearly forty—she suddenly marries someone else; why, we are not told, but have promise of the story of her career next year. The account of Edwin's impulsive visit to Brighton and his rescue of Hilda from the broker's men is one of the finest chapters of this enthralling romance; in the closing words of the book we find an indication of happiness for poor, baffled Edwin at last:—

Drowning amid the waves of her terrible devotion, he was recompensed in the hundredth part of a second for all that through her he had suffered or might hereafter suffer. The many problems and difficulties which marriage with her would raise seemed trivial in the light of her heart's magnificent and furious loyalty. He thought of the younger Edwin whom she had kissed into rapture as of a boy too inexperienced in sorrow to appreciate this Hilda. He braced himself to the exquisite burden of life.

With our praise of this really wonderful exposition of a developing mind we have to mingle two or three words of remonstrance upon minor points. Mr. Bennett is occasionally irritating when he seeks the "precious" phrase or the exotic term. He writes, for instance, of "the infidelity of the Tay Bridge three days after Christmas"; of "preprandial frequentings"; he speaks of croquet as being "in its first avatar"; and, although the word "souvenance" is to be found in Spenser, it seems to us that "memory" or "remembrance" in a purely English tale would have been more congruous with the spirit of the particular passage. Also, we protest against the use of the word "function" as a verb; it is unpleasant, even if legitimate—which we doubt. Having thus entered our slight complaint, we may close by recording our hearty enjoyment of "Clayhanger," and we await with impatience its promised continuation.

